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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIJING 005704

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SUBJECT: REACTION TO DISSIDENT LIU XIAOBO'S ONLINE ARTICLE
CRITICIZING RACISM TOWARD SECRETARY RICE ON CHINESE
WEBSITES

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel Morris. Reasons 1
.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Post has been monitoring Chinese websites and checking with contacts to track the reaction in China to an online article by dissident Liu Xiaobo criticizing racist comments toward Secretary Rice expressed by some netizens on Chinese websites at the time of the Secretary's March visit. Liu, a 1989-era activist who lives in Beijing but who is banned from publishing domestically, published his article on March 21 on the overseas online magazine Democratic China. He estimates that on popular website Sina.com some 70 out of 600 postings on the visit included racist comments, while only 5 took an anti-racist position. Liu's online article attracted the attention of Hong Kong's South China Morning Post, which mentioned Liu in an April 1 feature story stating that "reaction to US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's Beijing visit suggests judgments based on race and sex are an entrenched part of mainland life." Note: Western media representatives are on a China-focused listserve on which the Liu article is available but so far have not, with the exception of the South China Morning Post, written any articles on it of which we are aware. End Note.

¶2. (C) The Dean of Tsinghua University's Department of Sociology Li Qiang told Poloff on April 5 that he had not read Liu's article and doubted that it would be widely disseminated because Liu is a politically sensitive figure in China. He expressed the view, however, that Liu's thesis about widespread racism in China is correct. Comparing U.S. society to Chinese society, Li observed that China has never gone through a Civil Rights Movement and most Chinese have never pondered their own views toward other races. He noted that the Internet is a magnet for extremist views on race and cited the recent abundance of ethnic slurs against Japanese on the Internet as a manifestation of the type of hatred that can be found on cyber chat rooms. On highly charged issues such as Taiwan and Japan, nationalistic and chauvinistic Chinese will seek out like-minded people on the Internet and express themselves. Li noted that web monitors generally delete these hostile messages before there is wide distribution because there is concern about such discussion causing turmoil.

¶3. (C) Comment: The racist comments on which Liu reported do not reflect official Chinese Government views and the Chinese we have spoken to who have read the article have expressed deep embarrassment about its contents. There are, however, a significant number of individuals in China who use chatrooms and websites to express racist and anti-foreign, including anti-American, views. Part of the blame for this lies in the way in which Chinese citizens are educated to think about themselves and their country. The educational system, while emphasizing the historical harm that foreign racism has done to the Chinese people, tends not to highlight the idea that Chinese people might need to examine their own attitudes toward race.

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